

**BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER**  
**ON**  
**REDUCED FIREFIGHTER WORK SCHEDULE INITIATIVE**

**PURPOSE**

- To provide background information on a proposal to investigate the feasibility of reducing military firefighter scheduled duty hours using a standard 56-hour shift schedule.

**DISCUSSION**

- HQ USAF/ILE has expressed a concern with military firefighter's morale, retention, and discipline problems. The Civil Engineer Chiefs' and Airman's Councils met (Feb 00) and determined one of the key issues affecting firefighter morale and retention was the USAF firefighter standard 72-hour work week.
- Originally municipal communities felt the 72-hour workweek was the only financially viable and equitable solution for providing full-time fire protection. As the demands for service began to increase in the 1930s - 1950s, municipal departments realized the financial and productivity benefits of decreasing firefighter work hours.
  - The daily demands placed upon the fire service has steadily increased over the years, and as a result the civilian communities have reduced their firefighter work schedules.
  - Demands for Air Force fire service have also increased. Subsequent changes in the civil service pay structure ensured that the civilian firefighters are compensated for the actual number of hours spent on-duty.
  - Additional responsibilities such as hazardous materials and emergency medical response, confined space rescue, extended contingency deployments, and many others are an essential part of current USAF military fire department operations.
- The DoD fire service is one of the last in the country to continue working a 72+ hour workweek. In a 1999 survey by *Firehouse Magazine*, none of the 258 municipal departments surveyed reported working more than 56 hours per week (51 hours per week was the average).
- In addition to being on-duty almost twice the number of hours as their military counterparts, decreased staffing levels due to deployments, and other factors, have increased the number of hours worked per week. Scheduled days off have been lost and leaves are often cancelled or rescheduled.
  - The 72-hour work schedule for military firefighters does not include time spent for mandatory appointments, readiness training, etc (usually accomplished while off-duty).
  - Where funding allows, civilian employees are financially compensated for their overtime, otherwise military firefighters must remain on-duty to fill the gap.

- A multi-functional Integrated Process Team (IPT) has been charted to determine possible approaches and the resource impacts of reducing the USAF firefighter workweek using Operational Risk Management (ORM) procedures.
- Upon completion of the evaluation the IPT will make recommendations to HQ USAF/ILE for consideration (ECD: Mar 01)

**RECOMMENDATION**

- None. For information only